



## POLICIES AND MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES - WETLANDS

### POLICIES

#### 1. Wetlands Management

It is the intent of the borough and state to provide for the protection of the hydrologic, habitat and recreation functions of public wetlands. Land management practices shall be directed at minimizing adverse impacts on the following important functions of wetlands:

- a. Water quality: Wetlands serve to filter nutrients and sediment from upland run-off.
- b. Water supply: Wetlands serve to stabilize water supply by retaining excessive water during flooding and by recharging groundwater during dry periods.
- c. Habitat/recreation: Wetlands provide important feeding, nesting, and breeding grounds for many species; related recreational use is also important.

#### 2. Wetlands - A Definition

For the implementation of wetland policies and management guidelines, the following definition of wetlands shall apply: Wetlands are lands where saturation with water is the dominant factor determining the nature of soil development and the types of plant and animal communities living in the soil and on its surface. The single feature that most wetlands share is soil or substrate that is at least periodically saturated with or covered by water.\* For purposes of this plan, land areas must fall into one of the following two categories to be identified and mapped as wetlands:

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\* Cowardin, L.M., V. Carter, F.C. Golet, and E.T. LaRoe. 1979. Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States. USFWS, Office of Biological Services, FWS/OBS-79/31. Washington D.C. 103 pp.

- 1) land areas which, at least periodically, support predominantly hydrophytes\* and in which the substrate is predominantly very poorly drained or undrained hydric soil\*\*; or
- 2) land areas which are located within an active floodplain+; regardless of vegetation or soil conditions.

In accordance with this definition, wetlands in the Willow Sub-basin have been identified and mapped by combining data on soil drainage obtained from the Soil Conservation Service, with data on wetland vegetation types provided by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The resulting maps are available at offices of the Soil Conservation Service and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. These maps will be used to identify wetlands in the implementation of this plan.

### MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

For purposes of these management guidelines, wetlands are divided into three classes: Class I, wetlands larger than 100 acres and all wetlands with a locatable stream outlet (the stream shall be considered part of the wetland); Class II, wetlands between 40 and 100 acres with no outlet; and Class III, wetlands less than 40 acres with no outlet.

#### 1. Agricultural Development Adjacent To Wetlands

- a. Class I wetlands and certain surrounding lands (buffers) should remain in public ownership whenever feasible. A Class I wetland buffer shall include all soils of Class IV or worse agricultural capability (e.g. Class V, VI, etc.) which lie adjacent to the wetland or a 100-foot strip adjacent to the wetland - whichever provides the greatest buffer width. However, maximum buffer width should be 300 feet. Restrictive use covenants and public access easements rather than public ownership may be used to protect Class I wetlands and associated buffers under conditions specified in 4 below.

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\* hydrophyte: any plant growing in water or on a substrate that is at least periodically deficient in oxygen as a result of excessive water content.

\*\* hydric soil: soil that is wet long enough to periodically produce anaerobic conditions, thereby influencing the growth of plants.

+ active floodplain: the flood prone low lands and relatively flat areas adjoining inland and coastal waters including contiguous wetlands and floodplain areas of offshore islands; this will include, at a minimum, that area subject to a 1% or greater chance of flooding in any given year (100-year floodplain).

- b. Class II wetlands and certain surrounding lands (buffers) should remain in public ownership whenever feasible. A Class II wetland buffer shall include all soils of Class IV or worse agricultural capability which lie adjacent to the wetland, or a 60-foot strip adjacent to the wetland - whichever provides the greatest buffer width. However, maximum buffer width should be 300 feet.

Restrictive use covenants and public access easements rather than public ownership may be used to protect Class II wetlands and associated buffers under conditions specified in 4 below.

- c. Class III wetlands may be sold as part of the farmstead. Draining, clearing, or other modifications must conform to the applicable permit requirements (e.g. Army Corps of Engineers "Section 404" Permit).

## 2. Forestry Management Adjacent to Wetlands

- a. Winter access only should be used in or across wetlands whenever feasible.
- b. Selective timber harvest only will generally be permitted within 100 feet of Class I and II wetlands. This guideline may be changed for specific locations by DNR with the consultation of ADF&G.

## 3. Other Land Uses Adjacent to Wetlands

On all lands adjacent to public wetlands adequate buffers will be preserved in a natural state to protect the hydrologic, recreation and habitat functions of the wetlands. These buffers should be retained in public ownership whenever feasible. Restrictive use covenants and public access easements rather than public ownership may be used to protect wetland buffers under conditions specified in 4 below.

The following standards shall apply when publicly-owned wetlands or publicly-owned lands adjacent to wetlands are sold to private parties for non-agricultural use.

- a. Class I wetlands and land within 100 feet of Class I wetlands will remain in a natural state.
- b. Class II wetlands and land within 60 feet of Class II wetlands will remain in a natural state.
- c. Class III wetlands will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis through public land disposal processes or applicable public land management plans.

4. Restrictive Use Covenants and Public Access Easements

Class I and II wetlands (including outlet streams) and associated buffers should remain in public ownership whenever feasible. Restrictive use covenants and public access easements may be used rather than public ownership under the following conditions:

- a. Where the configuration of the wetland is such that survey along the meander of the wetland would be excessively expensive. In this case a aliquot part (rectangular) survey rather than a meander survey may be used along the edge of the wetland. This may result in portions of the wetland being conveyed to private ownership. Restrictive use covenants and public access easements shall be applied to ensure that those portions of the wetland and associated buffer conveyed to private ownership remain in a natural state and that public access and use are maintained.
- b. Where the wetland is entirely included with a parcel of land to be sold for private use. In this case the wetland and associated buffer may be conveyed to private ownership with restrictive use covenants which ensure that the wetland and associated buffer remain in a natural state. If there is a stream outlet from such a wetland, public access easements shall also be applied to both the outlet and the wetland.